

LUND UNIVERSITET, SOCIOLOGISKA INSTITUTIONEN

Afan Oromo and Code-switching - Mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo

*A Case Study of the Relationship between Afan Oromo (Oromo language) and  
Amharic/Amhara Language in Ethiopia*



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Tesfa Abdisa

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Handledare – Axel Fredholm

Lunds universitet

Sociologiska Institutionen

# Abstract

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This study is about code-switching or mixing Amharic with Afan Oromo in Ethiopia. The writer of this essay was born and grew up in Oromia and lived with the issue in question. This language question was created in the writer's mind since childhood, as it is true for many others. This drama was partially welcomed as something new, cool, nice...etc. and partially feared what the future of Afan Oromo would be if the situation continued uncontrolled. Despite the conflict getting magnified time after time, the majority of Oromos, Afan Oromo speakers had no clue when and why or how the drama began and how to solve it. This has become about life and death struggle between the two languages. Even if both Amharic and Afan Oromo are two distinguished languages, they lived side by side for centuries before the birth of the new political and language policy. Though the embedded political agenda was the original cause of the conflict, the social climbers, the portion of Oromo who consciously and unconsciously mixes, elites and wannabes are blamed for having sustained the conflict.

For this study, a qualitative method was used including interviews and observations. The result of the study showed that the cause of mixing or code-switching has a historical background to the Abyssinian policy of empire and territorial expansion, language policy, Amhara re-settlers, religious sectors, and immigration policy but Afan Oromo remains the prevalent language spoken in Oromia. And due to this kind of language, disconnections between the masses and the upper classes and misunderstandings and ignoring each other is a common problem. The Oromos seem to be determined not to accept the government's desire to unify the nations under one language, Amharic.

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Keywords: Language, power, religion, immigration, identity. Culture and Metropolitans.

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## 1. Introduction

This essay explores the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language mixing between Amharic and Afan Oromo speakers in Ethiopia. It is a mono-sided type of habit mixing Amharic, the Amhara language words and phrases into Afan Oromo, the Oromo language but not the vice-versa. The intermingling of these languages has become commonplace yet is concerning to some Oromo people as it may erode their mother tongue over time or at least degrade the value and interest in the speech society. This topic intersects with core sociological areas like language policy, cultural identity, assimilation, and power dynamics between ethnic groups. The essay aims to elucidate why portions of the Oromo population mix Amharic into their native Afan Oromo discourse. It seeks to determine the underlying social, political, historical, and identity factors that motivate this linguistic blending. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital will be applied to analyse how language choice grants higher social status or economic mobility. By exploring the motivations behind this phenomenon, the essay provides insight into the complex relationship between language, identity, and power in multicultural societies. It aims to raise awareness about how language mixing can slowly engender language shifts over generations - an issue facing minority linguistic groups worldwide. The conclusion will discuss implications and recommendations based on the research findings.

## 2. Problem

In this part, I will discuss the problems that this paper covers. These problems are (i) why Amharic words and phrases are mixed into Afan Oromo, (ii) who are the actors and (iii) what reasons there might be behind them. The literature presented here includes multiple

perspectives on the causes of code-switching or language mixing between Amharic and Afan Oromo, whether linguistic, social, political or other factors. What drives the incorporation of foreign words and phrases into one's native tongue? This phenomenon can create perceptions of language superiority and inferiority, influencing sociolinguistic identities across communities.

Does language carry the same meaning for all groups? What roles do religion, political dominance, and immigration play in code-switching trends? Why has Amharic infiltrated Afan Oromo discourse but not vice versa? What professions and spaces provide the context for contact between immigrants and Oromo people? What social dynamics motivate some Oromos to closely integrate immigrant languages like Amharic?

### 3. The aim of the study

The central focus of this research is to explore why some Oromo individuals incorporate Amharic words and phrases into their native Afan Oromo discourse. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Investigate the factors driving the integration of Amharic linguistic elements into Afan Oromo through qualitative analysis of individual contexts.
- Assess the influence of political dynamics, language policies, social factors, religious beliefs, migration patterns, oppression, and identity issues on the prevalence of code-switching between the two languages.
- Determine the potential effects that may emerge from the blending of Afan Oromo and Amharic over time.

The research aims to uncover motivations and historical backgrounds that prompt study participants to mix Amharic into their Afan Oromo speech. It will closely examine participants' family situations, political influences, educational experiences, and interactions with Amharic speakers that may play a role.

While not an exhaustive comparative analysis, the study intends to elucidate reasons for and possible impacts of this specific linguistic phenomenon. It seems to incorporate traditions like linguistic anthropology and cultural sociology to generate sociological insights into the interplay of language, identity, and other variables in Ethiopia.

## 4. Theory and theoretical framework

As already stated, this paper is about why some Oromo groups and individuals mix Amharic into Afan Oromo in their speech. My personal presumption is that the cause and motivation may be cultural, political, religion, migration or any societal and sociolinguistic or individual phenomena. Ethiopia is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual empire. Amharic is mixed not only into Afan Oromo but also in all entire Ethiopian languages. The mixers or code-switchers are not only Oromos either, but the habit also rather incorporates individuals and groups throughout the ethnical landscape of the individual languages of the empire. For the Islam religion followers, mixing Arabic into Afan Oromo is rather common, even outside the Moskey and in the everyday speech. For the elite group, mixing with English is widely exercised.

This language mixing practice can be understood through the lens of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to cultural knowledge, behaviours, education and skills that confer power, status and opportunity in a society according to Bourdieu (1986). Mastering the dominant language of Amharic, along with English, can be seen as acquiring valuable cultural capital in the Ethiopian context. Switching between these higher-status languages and their native Afan Oromo allows Oromo individuals and groups to signal their cultural competency, distinction and membership in elite social circles. It marks them as cultured, sophisticated and worldly. Their linguistic versatility, rather than rigid adherence to ethnic dialects, becomes symbolic of their learnedness and enables greater social mobility. For marginalised ethnic groups, code-switching serves as a pragmatic strategy for gaining symbolic and material resources. Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical ideas on social reproduction, symbolic power and cultural capital prove relevant for examining this unique speech pattern amongst the Oromo. Applying his critical lens can reveal deeper social inequalities and struggles for prestige that underlie such linguistic practices according to Bourdieu (1986).

This habit and practice do not imply only the habit of language mixing except the degree of the languages from good, better and best, meaning Afan Oromo (good), Amharic (better) and English (best) in which the individuals and groups give signals to the outside world which linguistical and social class they belong to. While these are the wider language habits amongst the Ethiopian multi-cultural societies, this study focuses only on the case of Afan Oromo and Amharic. This is because limitation is important to be able to shape the study to the given and

permitted level, in size and time. In addition to that, it is hardly possible to find earlier studies that covered these language habits in Ethiopia. To highlight the language-mixing habit of some Oromo portions, this study would refer to kinds of literature that cover multiple areas of language just for the purpose of this study. Theoretically, the empirical study would try to look at the relationships between language and the speech society and the relationships between languages in contact and how they influence each other generally and Afan Oromo and Amharic specifically.

## 4.1 The meaning of language

Language, as a multifaceted construct, is the bedrock of communication and a cornerstone of cultural identity and expression. It is through language that we not only convey thoughts and ideas but also embrace and preserve the rich tapestry of human heritage and diversity. The works of Afolayan (1984) and Bulcha, (1994/1995) underscore the pivotal role language plays in education and cultural development, as well as in the political landscape of multilingual societies such as Nigeria and Ethiopia.

The historical context provided by Arén (1978) and Melbaa (1988) highlights the transformative power of language in religious movements and nation-building, particularly in the Ethiopian context. The evangelical work in Ethiopia and the history of the Oromo people are testaments to how language can be a vehicle for spreading religious beliefs and a tool for forging a collective identity.

The language policies discussed by Bulcha (1994) and McNab (1987) reflect the complexities and challenges of implementing linguistic frameworks in multilingual settings. The Ethiopian experience illustrates the delicate balance between promoting a lingua franca for national unity and preserving the linguistic rights of diverse ethnic groups.

The preservation of language as a concern is poignantly addressed in Dalby's (2002) exploration of language endangerment. The loss of linguistic diversity is not merely a cultural tragedy but also a loss of unique perspectives and knowledge systems, as emphasised by (Gemechu and Aneesa, 2019) in their study of the sacred knowledge traditions of the Oromo. The sociolinguistic dynamics presented by Wardhaugh (2009) and the methodological considerations in social research by Smith (1999) and Tim (1997) provide a framework for analysing language as a social institution and its role in shaping group dynamics and



individual identities. In the light of these references, we can evolve the text from O'Grady (1997) to reflect a deeper understanding of the significance of language in various contexts: Language is not merely a system of communication but a repository of a community's collective memory and a reflection of its social complexities. It is an instrument for education, a marker of identity, and a medium through which cultural and religious legacies are preserved and transmitted. The intricate relationship between language and power is evident in the policies that govern its use, revealing the tensions between national cohesion and the recognition of linguistic diversity. As global forces threaten the survival of many languages, the urgency to safeguard this intangible heritage becomes paramount, for in each language lies a unique worldview and a wealth of indigenous knowledge. Thus, our engagement with language is both a personal journey and a collective responsibility, one that requires us to appreciate its nuances and advocate for its preservation as an essential facet of human diversity.

## 4.2 Language and politics

Language and politics are inextricably linked, as Linda Thomas (1999) suggests, with language serving as a powerful tool that can shape thought and influence public opinion. This relationship is further complicated by the dynamics of ethnolinguistic identity, where language becomes a symbol of cultural, religious, and social belonging, as seen in the preservation of native languages by distinct groups.

The interplay between language and societal status is nuanced, as Viveka (2015) points out. Official language recognition can significantly affect the perceived prestige and solidarity within a society. This perception influences not only how individuals are seen by others but also how they wish to be seen, which can lead to linguistic accommodation. Speakers may alter their language use or accent to either align with or distance themselves from their interlocutors, as a means of asserting their identity or signalling social belonging.

In the context of the Oromo and their interactions with other groups such as the Amhara, or within their own community between those who mix languages and those who do not, these dynamics are particularly salient. The historical and political backdrop provided by Bulcha (1994 and 1995). Melbaa (1988) gives insight into the Oromo's struggle for linguistic and cultural recognition, which is mirrored in the broader Ethiopian experience of language policy and ethnic identity.

The phenomenon of language mixing among the Oromo could be seen as a response to these complex social dynamics. It may serve as a bridge between different linguistic communities, a means of navigating different social spaces, or a reflection of individual bilingual or multilingual competencies. The work of Afolayan (1984) on the role of the English language in Nigerian education highlights the potential of multilingualism to foster multicultural development, a concept that can be applied to the Ethiopian context as well.

In evolving the text, we can consider the broader implications of language as a political instrument and a marker of identity:

Language is not just a tool for communication but also a potent instrument of political strategy and a marker of ethnolinguistic identity. It can be wielded to guide public opinion, influence decision-making, and uphold societal values. The recognition and status of a language within a society can profoundly affect the identity and solidarity of its speakers. In multilingual societies, the interplay between different language groups can lead to practices such as linguistic accommodation, where individuals adjust their language use to navigate social hierarchies and assert their cultural identity. This is evident in the experiences of the Oromo, who may blend languages as a means of cultural negotiation and identity assertion within the complex tapestry of Ethiopia's linguistic landscape. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for appreciating the role of language in both personal identity and the broader socio-political context.

### 4.3 Why language changes

Language is a dynamic entity, constantly evolving under the influence of various factors including global communication, governmental policies, and social changes. Dalby (2002) highlights the vulnerability of languages in the absence of support from printed materials, media, the internet, educational systems, and government documentation. These elements are crucial in maintaining a language's vitality, especially for minority languages that may otherwise succumb to the dominance of national or international languages.

The evolution of language can be seen as a response to the needs and pressures of its speakers. For instance, the work of Bulcha (1994/1995) on language policies in Ethiopia and the history of written Afan Oromo illustrates how governmental decisions can significantly impact the development and preservation of a language. Similarly, Afolayan (1984) discusses

the role of the English language in Nigerian education and its implications for multilingual and multicultural development.

The introduction of Onesimos Nasib's contributions to Oromo writing, as detailed by (Bulcha, 1995), is an example of how the creation of written traditions can bolster a language's status and ensure its transmission to future generations. This is in line with the concerns of language endangerment and the efforts to preserve linguistic diversity as emphasised by Dalby (2002).

In light of these references, we can further develop the text on why language changes:

Language change is an inevitable process shaped by a confluence of social, political, and technological forces. The introduction of new technologies shifts in educational policies, and the pervasive influence of global media all play a role in altering linguistic landscapes.

Minority languages, in particular, face the challenge of maintaining relevance in the face of dominant languages promoted by governmental policies and global communication networks.

The efforts to document and support these languages, as seen in the pioneering work of

Onesimos Nasib for the Oromo language, are vital in resisting language shift and ensuring linguistic diversity. The interplay between language and identity is complex, as languages are

not only tools for communication but also emblems of cultural heritage. As the world

becomes increasingly interconnected, the pressures on individual languages intensify, making the support for multilingual education and the preservation of written traditions more

important than ever.

## 4.4 Immigrant sex-workers and its influence on Afan Oromo

The influx of immigrant sex workers, particularly from the Amhara region, has woven a complex thread into the linguistic fabric of Afan Oromo. This influence is a contemporary echo of historical patterns where the intersection of different cultures and professions, including prostitution, has invariably shaped language. The phenomenon is not unique to Ethiopia; it mirrors the age-old impact of migration and trade on language evolution globally.

Historically, the social norms in various regions have often relegated certain groups, such as enslaved women from the Amhara-speaking group, to the margins where prostitution became a means of survival. This, in turn, facilitated the intermingling of languages, as seen in the blend of Amharic into Afan Oromo. The urban centres of Oromia, much like the historical

pubs and coffee houses of Stockholm, became melting pots of cultural and linguistic exchange, often driven by the socio-economic dynamics of the time.

Today, the estimated 200,000 women engaged in prostitution in Ethiopia are a stark indicator of the broader issues of human trafficking and socio-economic distress. The necessity that drives many into sex work is a powerful force, not only shaping individual lives but also influencing cultural and linguistic landscapes. The return of migrants from the Middle East, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has intensified these social issues and, by extension, their impact on language.

The historical context provided by scholars like (Bulcha, 1994/1995) and the work of Onesimos Nasib illustrates that language is a living, breathing entity that responds to the ebb and flow of societal shifts. The current crisis may well be a catalyst for further linguistic adaptation, with increased code-switching or borrowing between Amharic and Afan Oromo as diverse linguistic groups converge in urban areas like Addis Ababa.

The role of language in education and its influence on multilingual and multicultural development, as discussed by Afolayan, (1984), underscores the potential long-term effects of the current socio-economic challenges on language use and policy in Ethiopia. The blending of Amharic into Afan Oromo among immigrant sex workers and the broader community is a pragmatic response to the urban linguistic ecosystem, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of language. As Ethiopia contends with these challenges, the evolution of its linguistic tapestry will undoubtedly continue to reflect the lived experiences of its people. This underscores the importance of developing inclusive language policies that acknowledge and support the diverse linguistic realities of all communities within the nation.

## 4.5 An attempt to institutionalise Afan Oromo

An Oromo writer called Hiikaa, or Onesimos Nasib, was the first in Oromo literature. He organised an Oromo language team and created the first vital book and translated the Holy Bible into Afan Oromo. His literary works were both religious and secular and were from 1885 to 1898. However, according to Bulcha (1995), the political condition of the Ethiopian empire did not allow it, since the government planned to promote only the Coptic Church and the Amhara language, Amharic according to Bulcha (1995).

In the annals of Oromo literature, Hiikaa, also known as Onesimos Nasib, stands as a pioneering figure. A distinguished Oromo writer, he spearheaded the organization of an

Oromo language team, laying the foundation for the development of the first significant literary works. Notably, his contributions extended to the translation of the Holy Bible into Afan Oromo, marking a crucial milestone in Oromo literary history. His literary endeavours, spanning from 1885 to 1898, encompassed both religious and secular themes.

However, the socio-political landscape of the Ethiopian empire during this period posed formidable challenges to the institutionalization of Afan Oromo. According to Bulcha (1995), the prevailing political conditions were characterized by a government agenda favouring the Coptic Church and the promotion of the Amhara language, Amharic. This ideological stance hindered the widespread acceptance and propagation of Afan Oromo, undermining the efforts of Hiikaa and his Oromo language team. Bulcha (1995) contextualizes this struggle within the broader historical framework of Ethiopian politics, shedding light on the government's prioritization of the Coptic Church and Amharic language at the expense of linguistic diversity. The attempt to stifle the emergence and growth of Afan Oromo as a literary and cultural entity reflects a broader pattern observed in other African nations, as discussed by Afolayan (1984) in the context of Nigerian education.

A comparative examination of language dynamics in Ethiopia and the broader African continent reveals parallels with Evangelical initiatives, as explored by Arén, (1978) in the origins of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mecane Yesus. The evangelical pioneers' efforts to establish a religious foundation align with Hiikaa's endeavors, both reflecting the resilience of linguistic and cultural expressions against political constraints. In understanding the linguistic landscape described by Bulcha's, (1994) insights into the language policies of Ethiopian regimes provide valuable context. The historical struggle for the recognition and promotion of Afan Oromo reflects broader trends in language planning, as observed in various African nations, such as Zambia according to Kashoki (1982).

The intricate relationship between language, identity, and resistance becomes apparent when examining the contributions of Onesimos Nasib in the context of Ethiopian politics. The suppression of linguistic diversity, reminiscent of broader themes discussed by Dalby (2002), highlights the implications of language loss for cultural heritage and identity.

Despite the challenges, Hiikaa's pioneering contributions endure, echoing the sentiments of Emmanuel (1995) in "Reminiscences of My Life." The enduring impact of linguistic endeavours is further exemplified in Harmony English-Afan Oromo-Amharic Dictionary according to Epherem (1995), showcasing the ongoing efforts to preserve and celebrate

linguistic diversity. The attempt to institutionalise Afan Oromo through the works of Hiikaa underscores the resilience of linguistic and cultural expressions in the face of political adversity. The historical struggle depicted in this narrative echoes broader themes in African linguistic and cultural contexts, as explored by scholars across various disciplines. The ongoing discourse on language planning, identity, and cultural preservation remains integral to understanding the multifaceted dynamics at play in Ethiopia and beyond.

## 4.6 Sociolinguistic types of mixed languages

### 4.7 The term Jargon.

The term "Jargon" has its roots in the seventeenth century, originally denoting an obscure or secret language employed by specific occupational groups. Initially applied to the speech variety used by French beggars and street merchants, it later extended to describe the clandestine language of criminals, emphasising the secretive nature of communication within certain social circles (O'Grady, 1997). Jargon, in essence, serves as a speech form adopted by a social group whose members seek to conceal aspects of their communication from those outside their community.

Veveka V, (2015) drawing from sociolinguistic perspectives, emphasizes that Jargon, pidgin, or other outcomes of language contacts and mixing result from a variety of factors according to O'Grady (1997). This phenomenon is not confined to a specific time or place, as demonstrated by examples such as "Borgarmålet" in Sweden – an extinct trade Jargon in northern Sweden. This particular Jargon, "Borgarmålet," played a pivotal role in the trade between the Sami population and Swedish merchants in the northern coastal towns of Sweden, showcasing the dynamic linguistic interactions shaped by trade relationships according to Wardhaugh (2009).

Similarly, the existence of "Français Tirailleur," a French-lexified military pidgin, exemplifies the adaptability of language in contexts of power dynamics and cultural exchange. These instances underscore the fluidity of language and its capacity to evolve in response to sociocultural and historical circumstances according to Wardhaugh (2009).

Drawing connections between Jargon and broader linguistic phenomena, one can discern parallels with the sociolinguistic landscape in Ethiopia. Bulcha's (1995) exploration of

Onesimos Nasib's contributions to Oromo writing and the resistance against language suppression by Ethiopian regimes adds depth to the discussion. The intricate relationship between language, power, and identity is further illuminated by the historical struggle for linguistic recognition and promotion, as analysed by Bulcha, (1994) in the context of Ethiopian language policies.

The exploration of sociolinguistic types of mixed languages extends beyond geographical boundaries, finding resonance in discussions on multilingualism and multicultural development. Afolayan's (1984) examination of the English language in Nigerian education as a catalyst for proper multilingual and multicultural development provides valuable insights. The nuances of language planning, education policies, and their impact on linguistic diversity are essential considerations, as also discussed by Kashoki, (1982) in the context of rural and urban multilingualism in Zambia.

In unravelling the tapestry of sociolinguistic types of mixed languages, it becomes evident that linguistic dynamics are not isolated occurrences, but interconnected threads woven into the fabric of cultural, historical, and political landscapes. The broader literature, encompassing studies on African traditions, historical perspectives, and sociolinguistic frameworks, enriches our understanding of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and society according to Kashoki (1982).

## 4.9 Pidgin

Viveka's (2015) insightful definition characterises a pidgin as a simplified language that emerges when individuals lacking a common language must communicate, often in specific environments like markets, workplaces, or military settings. Notably, pidgins are not employed for domestic or routine social interactions. Their development is prompted by the need for communication between parties whose languages are mutually unintelligible, a situation distinct from dialect leveling seen in closely related languages such as Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. In cases where a full pidgin has not materialised, the resulting linguistic amalgamation may be termed an interlanguage or broken language.

The study of pidgins extends beyond linguistic analysis and connects with diverse examples across various cultural and historical contexts. A case in point is the Nigerian education system discussed by Afolaya, (1984), where the English language serves as a unifying force, acting as a bridge in a multilingual and multicultural setting. The role of English as a lingua

franca echoes the functional aspect of pidgins, fostering communication among individuals with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

In the historical context of Ethiopia, as explored by Bulcha, (199/1995), the struggle for linguistic recognition and resistance against language suppression under Ethiopian regimes offers a nuanced perspective. The emergence of linguistic resistance aligns with the dynamic nature of pidgins as adaptive forms of communication, responding to sociopolitical constraints.

Looking at the broader African landscape, the phenomenon of pidginisation finds resonance in discussions on rural and urban multilingualism, as discussed by Kashoki (1982) in Zambia.

The adaptability of language in diverse settings is evident, mirroring the flexibility inherent in the development of pidgins. The examination of rural and urban multilingualism provides an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of language dynamics within societies.

Within the Oromo cultural context, Gemechu and Aneesa's (2019) exploration of Sacred Knowledge Traditions sheds light on how linguistic expressions, akin to pidgins, can evolve to convey cultural nuances and preserve heritage. The interplay between language, culture, and sacred knowledge traditions underscores the multifaceted nature of linguistic evolution.

The regulations on the establishment of missions in Ethiopia, as documented in *Negarit Gazeta*, Ethiopian state Newspaper, (1944), also provide insights into the linguistic dynamics within specific institutional contexts. The language policies and planning for education in Ethiopia, as outlined by McNab (1987), further emphasise the deliberate efforts to shape linguistic landscapes, drawing parallels with the intentional development of pidgins for specific communicative purposes.

In conclusion, the concept of pidginisation is not confined to linguistic realms alone; it intertwines with broader sociocultural, historical, and political narratives. Examples from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Oromo traditions illustrate the adaptability and functionality of pidgins, showcasing their role as dynamic linguistic bridges that emerge to facilitate communication in diverse and challenging environments.

## 5. Mixed languages

The intriguing phenomenon of mixed languages unfolds as a product of dynamic language contact, intertwining elements from two or more distinct linguistic sources. These languages



often serve as poignant identity markers, reflecting the rich tapestry of cultures and communities. Unlike pidgins, which emerge out of a necessity for basic communication between groups lacking a common language, mixed languages evolve among communities already equipped with communication methods, expressing nuanced needs rather than compensating for communicative deficits.

Viveka (2015) sheds light on the diverse origins of mixed languages, citing social interactions such as mixed marriages as potential catalysts. Offspring born from such unions may adopt a hybrid identity, exemplified by the old Helsinki Slang. This language, a fusion of Swedish vocabulary and Finnish grammar, became a distinctive marker of urban identity among bilingual gangs in Helsinki from 1890 to 1950. The evolution of the Helsinki Slang demonstrates how mixed languages can encapsulate and preserve cultural expressions within specific communities.

The process of language mixing can also manifest through borrowing, as highlighted by O'Grady (1997), where elements from one language are seamlessly incorporated into another. An illustrative example is the borrowing within close-knit groups with shared cultural practices, such as small traders or musicians. These linguistic borrowings become integral to the cultural fabric, embodying a fusion of linguistic and cultural elements that enrich the expressive capacity of the community.

Wardhaugh (2021) introduces the nuanced concepts of superstrate and substrate languages in the context of language contact. The superstrate, typically the dominant language, interacts with one or more substrate languages of lower social status. However, intriguingly, the superstrate language in use is not always the standard variety; it might be a nonstandard form spoken by lower social strata. This dynamic interaction exemplifies the fluidity and complexity inherent in mixed languages, where linguistic influences may not align with societal power structures.

The relevance of mixed languages extends beyond linguistic dynamics and resonates in discussions on language maintenance, shift, or death, as noted by O'Grady (1997). In situations where speakers of less influential languages choose to maintain their tongue, it often reflects a deep-seated desire to preserve a separate identity for cultural or religious reasons. This mirrors the sociolinguistic landscape discussed by Bulcha (1995), in the context of Onesimos Nasib's contributions to Oromo writing, where language becomes a powerful tool in resisting assimilation.

The exploration of elite closure by Wardhaugh, (2021), wherein those in power utilize language to maintain their privileged positions, draws parallels with colonial language situations. These situations, as discussed by Melbaa (1988) in Oromia, often dictate access to higher education and government positions based on language proficiency. The language policies and planning for education in Ethiopia, discussed by McNab (1987), further underscore the intentional shaping of linguistic landscapes, impacting the linguistic evolution of communities.

In summary, the study of mixed languages unveils a captivating interplay of linguistic, cultural, and social dynamics. Examples from Helsinki, discussions on language borrowing, and insights into language contact and power dynamics enrich our understanding of how mixed languages become emblematic expressions of identity, culture, and community. The diverse perspectives provided by various references seamlessly contribute to a comprehensive exploration of this fascinating linguistic phenomenon.

*Question: What significance does Amharic hold in Afan Oromo for you? Answer: It's viewed as a language imposed during colonial times and maintained by the elite.*

The influence of language extends beyond communication; it shapes perceptions, identities, and power dynamics within societies. In Nigeria, the use of Pidgin as a unifying language has not only facilitated communication among diverse linguistic groups but has also influenced societal views on education and literacy. The association of English proficiency with education, as discussed by Afolayan (1984), has led to the erroneous assumption that non-English speakers are inherently illiterate, despite their proficiency in native languages.

Elite African families echo a similar trend, where English becomes the exclusive language of communication, sparking concerns about the potential loss of native linguistic expression.

Kashoki (1982) sheds light on the prevalence of English as a private and public language in elite African families, illustrating how language choice is intertwined with socio-economic status and cultural identity. This mirrors the situation in Ethiopia, where Amharic's dominance in elite communication is akin to the role of English in certain African contexts.

Turning our attention to Ethiopia, the historical suppression of Afan Oromo due to the Ethiopian occupation since the early 19th century, as highlighted by Bulcha (1995), has left a lasting impact on the development of Oromo literature. The language policy changes post-1958/59 further solidified Amharic's position as the primary language of instruction in elementary education, with English taking precedence in higher grades. This policy, detailed

by McNab (1989), not only affirmed Amharic's official status but also marginalized other Ethiopian languages in formal education.

The Oromo people's response to learning Amharic, as discussed by McNab (1989), presents an intriguing dynamic within Ethiopia's linguistic landscape. Despite the historical and political complexities surrounding Amharic, the Oromo people have shown a relatively positive attitude towards learning it compared to Tigrigna speakers. This phenomenon suggests that linguistic preferences and attitudes are shaped by a myriad of factors, including historical experiences and political considerations.

In conclusion, the significance of Amharic in the context of Afan Oromo reflects a complex interplay of historical, political, and sociolinguistic factors. The parallels drawn from Nigeria's language dynamics and the insights provided by various references contribute to a nuanced understanding of how language choices and policies impact identity, education, and communication within diverse African societies.

Languages are not merely tools of communication; they are intricate reflections of the users and their social contexts, often influenced by political ideologies that find expression in legislation. According to Wardhaugh (2021), language policies can serve to reinforce existing power structures, perpetuating the marginalization of minoritized groups in multilingual societies. The Ethiopian context exemplifies such dynamics, with instances of status planning, where a language like Amharic is elevated to official use within regions like Oromia, and corpus planning, involving comprehensive language development with government intervention.

Viveka (2015) delves into the intricate web of language policy, highlighting its role in assigning functional status to languages within societal domains like government, education, and media. The choice of official languages, often influenced by political elites, bestows prestige and normative status upon them, creating a hierarchy that often marginalizes vernacular languages. This mirrors the situation in Ethiopia, where the dominance of Amharic in official communication and education marginalizes languages like Afan Oromo.

The impact of language policies extends beyond official domains and seeps into cultural identity, education, and oral literature. During the era of colonization, the interaction between European and African languages resulted in the development of pidgins or code-switching. This was a response to the dominant groups' failure to learn the native languages of subordinates, necessitating the creation of simplified languages for basic communication.

A historical perspective, provided by The Diagram Group (1997), sheds light on the term 'Oromo,' encompassing both the people and their language, originating from the Oromia region in present-day Ethiopia. The historical narrative reveals Oromia's past as an independent nation until Amhara forces overthrew the Oromo leadership in the early 20th century, solidifying the emperor's rule over Ethiopia.

Drawing from various references, it becomes evident that language is not a neutral entity but a powerful force entwined with politics, history, and cultural identity. The complexities surrounding language policy in Ethiopia, as discussed by McNab (1989) and Bulcha, (1995), highlight the struggle for linguistic representation and recognition within a diverse sociolinguistic landscape.

In conclusion, the evolution of languages in Ethiopia, particularly the dynamic between Amharic and Afan Oromo, encapsulates a multifaceted narrative of historical, political, and sociolinguistic dimensions. The parallels drawn from diverse examples and references contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between languages and the societies that shape and are shaped by them.

## 5.1 Oromo language: past, present and the future

Afan Oromo, the language of the Oromo people, encapsulates a rich linguistic heritage with a substantial number of speakers. However, despite its vitality, it has endured marginalisation since the establishment of the Ethiopian empire, rendering it relatively obscure on the global stage. Over the years, concerted efforts by political and cultural advocates have aimed at revitalising and empowering Afan Oromo, leading to noteworthy milestones in its script and official status.

The journey of Afan Oromo's script evolution is a testament to the resilience of linguistic identity. Historically marginalised, Afan Oromo started to gain visibility in the mid-1970s as some writers embraced the Roman script. The culmination of this effort was the official adoption of the Qubee alphabet in 1991, a significant milestone that marked Afan Oromo's acknowledgment and acceptance. Today, Afan Oromo stands proudly as the official language in Oromia, utilized in schools and government institutions.

However, the future of Afan Oromo is not without challenges, mirroring global trends in linguistic diversity. The dominance of Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, poses a constant threat, as political dynamics continue to influence linguistic landscapes. Additionally,

the forces of globalisation and the inadequacy of institutional support for language preservation pose risks of language loss. This situation is not unique to Afan Oromo but reflects a broader struggle faced by minority languages worldwide.

The narrative of Afan Oromo is intricately woven into the socio-political fabric of Ethiopia, as highlighted in references such as the Diagram Group (1997) and Bulcha (1994). These sources underscore the persistent struggle for linguistic recognition and representation within a complex historical context. The clash between dominant and minority languages, as well as the implications of language policies, is a recurring theme that reverberates across diverse regions and communities.

The efforts to revive and safeguard Afan Oromo draw parallels with similar endeavours globally, reflecting the interconnected challenges faced by minority languages. References such as Kashoki (1982) and McNab (1987), provide insights into the broader implications of language planning and policies in the context of multilingual societies, offering a comparative lens for understanding the nuances of linguistic preservation.

Afan Oromo's journey encapsulates the resilience of linguistic identity amidst historical marginalisation. The adoption of the Qubee alphabet and its official status in Oromia signify crucial steps toward linguistic empowerment. However, the challenges that lie ahead underscore the ongoing struggle for linguistic diversity and the imperative for sustained efforts in language preservation. The global discourse on language preservation, enriched by diverse examples and references, enhances our understanding of the complex interplay between language, politics, and identity.

## 5.2 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's theoretical framework extends the notion of capital beyond economic realms, introducing social and cultural dimensions that significantly influence societal structures. Cultural capital, as proposed by Bourdieu (1999), goes beyond the conventional Marxist emphasis on economic capital alone, shedding light on the intricate ways in which social differences are shaped. According to Bourdieu (1999) a myopic view that attributes societal disparities solely to honour, talent, and merit overlooks the pervasive impact of diverse forms of capital, perpetuating and exacerbating social inequalities.

To illustrate this concept further, let's explore examples drawn from various cultural and linguistic contexts, as informed by the extensive references provided:

### 5.3 Language as Cultural Capital in Oromia/Ethiopia

Drawing from the works of Bulcha (1994) and Hordofa (2015), Ethiopia's linguistic landscape serves as a prime example. The policies regarding the official status of languages, such as Amharic and Afan Oromo, reflect the intricate interplay between cultural capital and societal dynamics. The dominance of a particular language, often chosen by political elites, bestows prestige and normative status, marginalising other vernacular languages within the nation.

### 5.4 Educational Language Policies in Nigeria

Afolayan (1984) suggests on the English language in Nigerian education how important language operates as cultural capital. The preference for English as a medium of instruction can shape perceptions of intelligence and literacy, creating a hierarchy of languages. This phenomenon has repercussions on the cultural capital associated with different languages and influences societal attitudes towards linguistic diversity.

### 5.5 Cultural Capital and Historical Struggles

Frantz Fanon's insights in "Black Skin, White Masks" (1967) offer a lens into the historical struggles tied to cultural capital. The impact of colonialism on language, identity, and power dynamics is evident in the way dominant languages, often associated with colonial powers, hold cultural capital. The imposition of European languages during colonisation disrupted linguistic landscapes, leading to enduring challenges and disparities.

### 5.6 Linguistic Identity in Multilingual Zambia

Kashoki's study (1982) on rural and urban multilingualism in Zambia provides another perspective on cultural capital. The linguistic diversity within Zambia and the societal attitudes towards different languages exemplify how language can function as a form of cultural capital. The languages spoken can influence social perceptions, access to resources, and opportunities, shaping the cultural capital of individuals and communities.

## 5.7 Societal Dynamics and Language Planning in Ethiopia

McNab's exploration (1987) of language planning for education in Ethiopia contributes to understanding the cultural capital associated with language policies. The choices made in language instruction, the promotion of certain languages, and the historical context of language planning all play a role in shaping cultural capital within Ethiopian society.

By integrating these examples, we gain a comprehensive understanding of cultural capital's role in shaping societal structures across diverse contexts. Bourdieu's framework proves valuable in illuminating the multifaceted nature of capital and its implications for social inequalities, offering a lens through which we can analyse and address cultural dynamics in various communities worldwide.

## 6. The qualitative Method

Even if the quantitative method or the combination of the two would have worked, because of the nature of this study, for time-saving and limiting the framework and making the approach as natural going as possible the qualitative method is preferred. Besides that, the qualitative research method provides the incorporations of a variety of empirical data collection like personal experience, introspection, life story interview and different observation methods, as used in this study. The qualitative method also provided me with more possibilities to emboss the research, as I have learned from Norman, Denzin, Yvonna, Lincoln (2003) and Bryman, (2022). To enhance the methods study/ interview methods like structured, semi-structured, group interview and observation approaches were used as advised by May (1997) and Bryman (2022).

### 6.1 Procedure

Establishing contact with people having important roles in the field study was time-consuming work. I contacted Oromo individuals both in Ethiopia and in Sweden. It took me a few days to arrange for the project and establish some preconditions for the interviews, for example, planning for those randomly and systematically chosen participants. Some of the interviews were planned and took place after observations and group interactions. The study

method even included planned and spontaneous observations at different places, events and situations.

## 6.2 Collected data result Discussion

Data collection was done by recording on audiotape, taking notice and Observation, with taking conscious care for place and conditions for the security of the study and all concerned participants and for myself. The idea of visiting or observing some special and sensitive places of action was taken into consideration later, after having listened to several participants. The notes taken were written down accurately and precisely. The parts of the materials that were considered irrelevant did not enter the analysis but were stored for later examination. The collected data were categorised into subdivisions and categories to sort out the data that was irrelevant to this study and to avoid redundancy, according to May (1997).

## 6.3 The Respondents

The participants were men and women between the ages of about 15 and 90. The total number of interviews made was 70 and observations were 40, who all together finally are represented by 11 respondents. The participants did not want to be identified by their real names due to diverse matters. Instead, they are identified with the pseudonym name IP., interview person, 1-11 in the text flow. The participants were from the cross-section of the Oromo society in Western Oromia/Ethiopia. Oromos living in Sweden are among the observed groups and are minimal in number. Respondents are people of different educational levels, occupations, and ages, urban and countryside. In this study, it has been even possible to interview politicians like one of Oromia's ex-presidents and others employed by government and private organisations, those who dealt with the authorities of the empire for a longer period, in political and religious aspects. The respondents are residents of Finfinnee/Addis Abeba, students from Wallaggaa province, travelers, visitors, businessmen and women and others.

## 6.4 Interviews result analyse and discussion.

In this part, I will present some core points taken from the interview results. The interview is based on the respondent's language journey or language self-biography and is presented in a



narrative form for each respondent. Interview respondents are from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

## 7. The Result

This section presents the findings on the incorporation of Amharic into Afan Oromo speech, exploring the influence of language policy and individual agency. Participants were queried on their use of language mixing and their motivations behind it.

Some key points the questions want to clarify:

- Several IPs reported mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo due to needing to communicate with Amharic speakers, influence of the Orthodox church, etc. Some also mix to show pride or status.
- Attitudes towards mixing vary - some see it as practical; some avoid it purposefully out of concern for protecting Afan Oromo.
- Mixing seems to happen both consciously and unconsciously by different individuals.
- For some, Afan Oromo represents their identity and culture, while for others it is more utilitarian.
- There seem to be some sociolinguistic divisions or tensions that can arise from mixing the two languages.

### 7.1 Language Policy and Individual Practices

The results section of the study on language mixing between Amharic and Afan Oromo reveals a complex interplay between institutional language policies and individual linguistic behaviours. Participants' experiences with language mixing varied significantly, with educational settings being a common arena for the practice. One participant's account illustrates the early stages of language mixing, which began upon entering a school system where the use of Afan Oromo was explicitly banned. This prohibition, however, did not deter students from speaking their native language; instead, it led to a linguistic compromise where Amharic words were incorporated into Afan Oromo speech. This blending of languages was not merely a form of resistance but also a practical adaptation to an environment where Amharic was the medium of instruction and the language of textbooks.

Another participant highlighted the broader sociopolitical context, noting that the dominance of Amharic was not a natural linguistic evolution but a consequence of deliberate government policy. This policy effectively marginalised Afan Oromo, relegating it to vernacular, a secondary status within the public sphere and educational institutions. The participant's observation underscores the role of language policy as a tool for shaping societal language use, often favouring one language at the expense of another.

These individual narratives point to a broader pattern where language policies enacted by authorities can have profound and lasting effects on everyday language practices. The participants' experiences suggest that language mixing in Oromia is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of historical power dynamics and the ongoing struggle for linguistic and cultural recognition.

## 7.2 Reasons for Language Mixing

The motivations behind language mixing among the study's participants were multifaceted and deeply rooted in both personal and societal factors. Habitual use emerged as a common theme, with some individuals reporting that the interlacing of Amharic into Afan Oromo occurred subconsciously, without deliberate intention. This habitual mixing often reflected the linguistic landscape of the participants' environments, where Amharic's prevalence in media, education, and public discourse made its incorporation into daily speech almost second nature. Conversely, other participants engaged in conscious mixing, viewing the use of Amharic as a symbol of sophistication and a connection to broader national narratives. For them, the ability to speak Amharic or to mix it with Afan Oromo was a marker of education and modernity, a stance that was sometimes reinforced by the status associated with Amharic as Ethiopia's official language.

The influence of religious institutions and demographic shifts also played a significant role in language practices. One participant specifically cited the Orthodox Church and the influx of Amharic-speaking immigrants as catalysts for change. The church's use of Amharic in liturgy and religious education, coupled with the social interactions with Amharic speakers, created a bilingual context that necessitated and normalised the mixing of languages. This participant's account underscores the complex interplay between identity, language, and social structures, illustrating how language mixing can serve as a bridge between different cultural and linguistic communities.

## 7.3 Identity and Language Mixing

The intricate relationship between identity and language mixing is highlighted by the participants' reflections. For one respondent, the habit of mixing languages was not merely a linguistic choice but a response to the cultural and religious hegemony of the Orthodox Church and the administrative presence of government officials. This participant's language use was shaped by the institutional forces that promote Amharic, reflecting a broader narrative of cultural assimilation and identity negotiation.

Another participant's experience with language mixing was influenced by the demographic changes in their community, particularly the influx of Amharic-speaking immigrants. This movement of people brought with it the language of the Amhara region, which, when coupled with the government's language policy favouring Amharic, led to an increased blending of the languages. The participant's account reveals how language mixing can be a manifestation of socio-political dynamics, where the dominance of one language group can lead to the dilution of another's linguistic identity. These narratives underscore the complexity of language mixing as it relates to identity. It is not simply a matter of linguistic preference but is deeply intertwined with the socio-cultural fabric of the community. The participants' experiences suggest that language mixing can both challenge and reinforce identity, serving as a site of cultural resistance or as a means of navigating the pressures of linguistic conformity imposed by dominant groups and institutions.

## 7.4 Language Mixing as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon

Language Mixing as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon: The study's findings underscore the prevalence of language mixing among participants, showcasing a rich tapestry of attitudes toward its impact on the Oromo language and cultural identity. On one hand, there is a palpable concern among some participants regarding the potential erosion of the Oromo language's integrity and the subsequent loss of cultural heritage. This apprehension is rooted in the fear that the unique linguistic features and idiomatic expressions that define the Oromo identity may be at risk of being subsumed by more dominant languages.

On the other hand, a contrasting group perceives this linguistic interweaving as an inevitable and natural facet of linguistic evolution, indicative of the adaptive and dynamic nature of language as it responds to the ebb and flow of cultural shifts and external influences. This

group tends to embrace the fluidity of linguistic boundaries and the potential for language to evolve, reflecting the changing realities and needs of its speakers.

The dichotomy between these perspectives is emblematic of the broader sociolinguistic discourse on language vitality and change. It highlights the complex interplay between language maintenance and language shift, where languages are not static entities but living constructs that continuously adapt to the sociopolitical and cultural landscapes in which they are spoken.

Furthermore, the acceptance of language mixing by some participants can be seen as a pragmatic acknowledgment of the multifunctional nature of language in society. It serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for social integration, economic advancement, and educational development. In multilingual contexts, the ability to code-switch and mix languages becomes a valuable skill, enabling individuals to navigate different social spheres and cultural settings effectively, even if that leads to a no man's language and a language without grammatical law like that of the pidgin language explained above and below.

The study also reflects the broader global phenomenon of language contact and mixing, which is not unique to the Oromo context. As people migrate and societies become increasingly interconnected, languages come into contact with one another, leading to the borrowing of words, phrases, and structures. This process can result in the emergence of pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages, which are a testament to the human capacity for linguistic innovation and adaptation.

In conclusion, language mixing within the Oromo community is a multifaceted phenomenon that encapsulates the challenges and opportunities presented by linguistic diversity. It raises important questions about language policy, education, and the role of language in shaping individual and collective identities. As such, it warrants careful consideration and ongoing research to understand its implications for the future of the Oromo language and the sociolinguistic landscape at large.

## 7.5 Resistance to Language Mixing

Language Mixing as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon: The study's findings reveal that language mixing is a widespread practice among the participants, showcasing a spectrum of attitudes regarding its effects on the Oromo language and cultural identity. Concerns about the potential

weakening of the Oromo language are side by side with perceptions of linguistic blending as an organic element of language evolution. This polarity highlights the inherent dynamism of language, which inherently shifts and morphs in response to sociocultural transformations and external pressures.

The nuanced views of language mixing reflect a deeper understanding of linguistic fluidity and the natural tendency of languages to borrow and fuse elements over time. For some, this process is a testament to the resilience and adaptability of language, allowing for the creation of new dialects and modes of expression that mirror the complex identities of their speakers. For others, it raises alarms about the preservation of linguistic purity and the risk of cultural erosion. The phenomenon of language mixing is not merely a linguistic process but also a reflection of historical power relations, migration patterns, and policies that have favoured certain languages over others. It is a mirror to the socio-political context in which these languages exist, often revealing the dominance of one culture or group within a society. Moreover, the study suggests that language mixing can serve as a bridge between generations, allowing younger speakers to navigate multiple cultural domains. It can also be a strategic tool for social mobility, as proficiency in the dominant language or dialect within a community can open doors to educational and professional opportunities.

In essence, language mixing is a multifaceted sociolinguistic phenomenon that encapsulates the complexities of identity, power, and communication in a multicultural society. It is a living testament to the ongoing dialogue between tradition and change, between the local and the global, and between the past and the present. As such, the study of language mixing not only provides insights into the mechanics of language change but also into the broader social processes that drive human interaction and cultural development.

## 7.6 Bourdieu's Theory of Linguistic Capital

The phenomenon of language mixing as evidenced in this study can be further examined through the lens of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concept of linguistic capital. According to Bourdieu, linguistic capital refers to the social profits and symbolic power afforded to an individual based on their mastery of and competency in a particular language or dialect referred to by Bourdieu (1991).

In the context of the Oromo community, Amharic represents valuable linguistic capital given its status as Ethiopia's official administrative language and its dominance in key institutions

like education, media and religion. By mixing Amharic into their Afan Oromo speech, Oromo individuals may be strategically acquiring and converting this linguistic capital into social and economic capital. Code-switching serves as a cultural currency that increases their chances for social mobility.

As one participant noted, the Orthodox Church's use of Amharic created an impetus for language assimilation. Proficiency in Amharic granted access to desired social networks and religious authority. This drive for inclusivity compelled linguistic adaptation.

Additionally, in line with Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, Oromo parents who enroll their children in Amharic-instruction schools may be deliberately equipping them with linguistic capital and cultural competencies to aid their advancement in Ethiopia's Amhara-dominated power structure according to Bourdieu (1991).

Thus, an analysis using Bourdieu's critical scholarship exposes how language mixing amongst minority Oromo ethnic groups is not simply an organic process but tied to deliberate attempts to acquire valuable capital needed to ascend Ethiopia's social hierarchy. It reveals the underlying power dynamics driving particular language use.

## 7.7 Common factors between Amharic and Afan Oromo

The intermingling of Amharic and Afan Oromo languages, as the study reveals, is a multifaceted process deeply rooted in the historical, political, and social fabric of the region. The divergent views of participants on language mixing reflect a broader debate on linguistic identity and survival in the face of globalisation and cultural exchange. For some, the blending of languages is seen as a dilution of the Oromo language, potentially threatening the very essence of their cultural identity and heritage. This perspective is often informed by a desire to preserve linguistic purity and a fear of cultural homogenisation.

Conversely, other participants embrace language mixing as an inevitable consequence of language contact, indicative of the natural evolution of languages. This group often views linguistic adaptation as a positive and enriching process, one that can lead to greater flexibility and innovation in communication. They recognise that languages are not static but are living entities that evolve with human interaction and societal changes.

The study highlights the importance of individual agency in these linguistic dynamics.

Personal choices, daily interactions, and varying degrees of bilingualism all contribute to the

shaping of linguistic behaviour. The decisions made by individuals in their language use—whether to resist or embrace mixing—collectively influence the trajectory of the language's development.

Moreover, the complexity of language practices in multilingual contexts such as this cannot be understated. The interplay between different languages within a community is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of power dynamics, historical legacies, and the ongoing negotiation of identity. Language policies, educational systems, and media representation all play significant roles in either reinforcing or challenging the status quo of language use.

In conclusion, the study of Amharic and Afan Oromo language mixing is not just an examination of linguistic patterns but also an exploration of cultural resilience and adaptability. It calls for a nuanced understanding of language as both a marker of identity and a tool for navigating an increasingly interconnected world. The varied responses to language mixing among the participants underscored the need for inclusive language policies that recognise the complexities of multilingual societies and the value of linguistic diversity.

## 8. Discussion

Motivations Behind Amharic-Afan Oromo Code-Switching in Ethiopia is the complex interplay between language policies, identity, and individual agency is a central theme connecting much of the literature to the stated research aims. As Afolayan (1984) notes regarding language policies in education systems can profoundly shape multilingual contexts, often promoting certain languages over others. This reflects the study's aim to assess the influence of institutional policies on the blending of Amharic and Afan Oromo.

Similarly, Arén (1978) and Bulcha (1994) document how the marginalisation of indigenous languages like Afan Oromo was tied to deliberate efforts to promote Amharic under various Ethiopian regimes. The study seeks to uncover such political and historical motivations behind present-day language mixing. Kashoki (1982) also found that rural-urban migration patterns affect multilingual practices, further underscoring the need to examine demographic factors.

The study's goal of elucidating the interplay between language and identity also connects to much of the literature. As Frantz (1967) explored, language and identity are deeply interlinked, with language policies and practices often tied to power dynamics between

groups. Melbaa (1988) contextualised this in relation to Ethiopia's complex linguistic landscape and the struggle for Oromo cultural recognition. Emmanuel (1995) provided first-hand insight into these identity negotiations from his own multilingual upbringing. More broadly, the sociolinguistic phenomena of code-switching and language contact resonate with the study's aims. Drawing on O'Grady et al (1997) and Wardhaugh (2009), notes that code-switching is common in multilingual communities as a means of adapting language use to varying contexts. This aligns with the study's intention to uncover motivations behind Amharic-Oromo code-switching.

Additionally, Smith (1999) advocates qualitative inquiry to understand complex linguistic behaviours, fitting the study's choice of individual interviews. Diagram Group (1997) offers a reference for the cultures and languages impacted by Amharic-Oromo mixing over time.

Dalby's (2002) concept of language endangerment provides an analytical lens for interpreting the practice's long-term impacts.

In summary, a diverse body of literature connects to this study across multiple dimensions. It provides vital socio-historical context as well as conceptual grounding in areas like language policy, identity, code-switching practices, and the interrelationship between culture and language. The cited works offer analytical frameworks, methodological guidance, and comparative cases to inform this specific exploration of Amharic-Oromo language mixing. Their relevance underscores the value of interdisciplinary approaches in elucidating complex sociolinguistic dynamics.

## 8.1 Language Mixing: Implications for Identity and Cultural Resilience

The complex phenomenon of language mixing between Amharic and Afan Oromo reveals profound insights into identity formation, cultural adaptation, and the resilience of minority languages. As the qualitative study demonstrates, the motivations behind linguistic blending are multifaceted, encompassing political, social, religious and educational factors. For the Oromo people, the incorporation of Amharic into their native tongue is emblematic of a broader struggle for cultural recognition and linguistic parity in the face of historical marginalisation.



At an individual level, the embrace or resistance to language mixing is intimately tied to one's sense of self and ethnic pride. Those who consciously avoid linguistic blending view it as an erosion of their authentic Oromo identity, shaped by a rich cultural heritage stretching back generations. For them, the mother tongue is the vessel carrying their customs, ideologies and worldviews, conveying meaning and values in ways no other language can capture. Diluting this linguistic tradition through mixing threatens the continuity of this identity, severing the bond between contemporary Oromos and their forebears.

In contrast, participants who nonchalantly incorporate Amharic into their speech perceive language as an adaptive tool for navigating their social context. Instead of tying their self-concept solely to ethnic lineage and purity of tongue, they define identity as a fluid construct shaped by external interactions. For them, code-switching and lexical borrowing are inevitable consequences of a multicultural society, enabling communication across linguistic divides. Their cultural identity is not reliant on the exclusivity of a single language but is reinforced through diversity of experience.

On a collective level, the phenomenon of language mixing mirrors the power dynamics that have historically marginalised the Oromo people and their culture. The assimilationist policies intent on spreading the Amharic language, often at the expense of native tongues like Afan Oromo, have created an imbalance that is reflected in individual speech patterns to this day. The prominence of Amharic in the institutional domains of religion, education and governance solidified its dominance and permeability into casual discourse. Consequently, the Oromo language had to adapt lexical and phonetic elements from Amharic for relevance and survival in an environment stacked against it.

For minority linguistic groups, the prevalence of language mixing thus symbolises an ongoing struggle between cultural resilience and external pressures to conform. It encapsulates the tension between preserving authentic cultural expression and adapting to modernity in ways that may dilute heritage but enable progress. This precarious balance has critical implications for identity formation – both on how individuals view themselves within a collective, and how the collective retains symbolic elements of its identity across generations buffeted by cultural winds.

Indeed, the very existence of Oromo as a living language despite centuries of marginalisation is a testament to its cultural resilience. Its evolution through incorporating foreign words and phrases embodies the reality that cultures that become rigid and closed-off often struggle to

persist over long periods. Linguistic purism, while important for maintaining idiomatic coherence, can also distance a language from the changing realities of its speech community. Finding the right equilibrium is thus critical for minority languages – folding in outside influences to stay relevant while retaining enough internal diversity to be identifiable as a distinct language and marker of ethnic identity.

The Oromo people’s ability to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity despite political and social turbulence suggests an inherent adaptability that bodes well for the future.

However, deliberate efforts must be made to counteract the imbalance that favours Amharic in critical spheres like education, governance and media. Concrete policy changes need to accompany the resilience demonstrated by Oromos thus far, to create an environment where their language and cultural expressions can truly flourish. The qualitative evidence shows the tensions inherent in identity formation and preservation are playing out on very personal, individual levels through simple daily speech. Until steps are taken to redress historic inequities, Oromos will continue code-switching as a necessary adaptation, instead of freely integrating Amharic words into Afan Oromo discourse as equal languages contributing to a shared cultural tapestry.

In essence, the phenomenon of language mixing provides a window into the resilience displayed by minority communities as they navigate pressures to assimilate while retaining symbolic elements of their identity. It reveals the continuous process of identity negotiation – characterised by both persistence and adaptation, purity and hybridity – that allows cultures to remain dynamic across generations in the face of external turbulence. Understanding this delicate dance between continuity and change is critical for policymakers and educators to support minority languages and by extension the worldviews they sustain.

## 9. Conclusion

The intricate tapestry of language dynamics within the Oromo community, as explored in this study, reveals the profound impact of historical, political, and sociolinguistic factors on the evolution of Afan Oromo. The incorporation of Amharic into Afan Oromo is not merely a linguistic adaptation but a reflection of the complex interplay between identity, power, and cultural resilience. While some view language mixing with apprehension, fearing the erosion of the Oromo language and identity, others perceive it as a natural and enriching process that fosters communication and cultural exchange.

The legacy of Onesimos Nasib and the historical struggle for linguistic recognition underscore the importance of developing inclusive language policies that support the diverse linguistic realities of all communities. As Ethiopia continues to navigate its multilingual landscape, the experiences of the Oromo people offer valuable insights into the role of language as both a marker of identity and a tool for social navigation.

Applying Bourdieu's theory, the mixing of Amharic into Afan Oromo speech can be seen as a strategic acquisition of linguistic capital. Mastery of Ethiopia's official language enables Oromos to access educational and economic opportunities structured around Amharic competency. This perpetuates social inequalities and power dynamics that privilege certain languages. Bourdieu's critical perspective reveals the struggles for prestige underlying unique language practices.

This study, therefore, not only contributes to our understanding of the sociolinguistic phenomena within the Oromo community but also highlights the broader implications for language policy and cultural development. It calls for a nuanced appreciation of language mixing as part of the dynamic evolution of language, shaped by the forces of history, migration, and the ongoing quest for social and linguistic equilibrium.

## 10. Summary

The paper examines the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language mixing, Amharic words and phrases into Afan Oromo in Ethiopia, a practice that has become common but raises concerns among some Oromo people about the potential erosion of their mother tongue or reducing it to vernacular. It delves into the social, political, historical, and identity factors driving this linguistic blending, applying Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to understand language choices related to social status and economic mobility. The paper explores various motivations behind language mixing, including perceptions of language superiority and inferiority, and the roles of religion, political dominance, and immigration in code-switching trends. It also discusses the impact of evangelical work and the history of the Oromo people on language as a vehicle for religious beliefs and a tool for identity formation. Language policies in Ethiopia are examined, reflecting the challenges of balancing national unity with the linguistic rights of ethnic groups. The essay addresses the issue of language endangerment and the loss of unique perspectives and knowledge systems, citing studies on the sacred knowledge traditions of the Oromo.

Methodological considerations for analysing language as a social institution are provided, emphasising its role in shaping group dynamics and individual identities. The essay argues that language is not just a communication system but also a repository of collective memory and a reflection of social complexities, instrumental in education, identity marking, and cultural and religious legacy preservation. The interplay between language and societal status is discussed, noting how official language recognition affects perceived prestige and solidarity, leading to linguistic accommodation where speakers adjust their language use to assert identity or signal social belonging. The paper also touches on why language changes, citing factors like global communication, governmental policies, and social changes, and the influence of immigrant sex workers on the Afan Oromo language. It concludes by discussing the past, present, and future of the Oromo language, highlighting the struggle for linguistic recognition and the importance of inclusive language policies that support linguistic diversity.

## 11. Appendix:

## 12. Sources

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## 13. Interview guide

The following questions are those all the participants had to answer. As I have already mentioned all the interview persons/participant's anonymity is guaranteed to be remained untold:

### 1. Do you mix Amharic into Afan Oromo?

IP.1 learned to mix due to the presence of an Orthodox Church priest in the village.

IP.3 avoided mixing but did so when necessary.

IP.6 began mixing after joining the school.

IP.11 mixes when visiting certain places or interacting with certain sectors.

### 2. If you speak Amharic, do you mix Afan Oromo into it?

IP. 8 Yes I do speak Amharic but never mix Afan Oromo into Amharic.

Some IP. said that they speak Amharic but mixing Afan Oromo into Amharic is a shame, it does not work that way. In that case, one had absolutely been laughed at by the speakers.

### 3. Are there causes behind your mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo?

- Several IP answered that the causes include the need to communicate with Amharic speakers like Orthodox Church priests, the influence of Amharic-speaking immigrants, and the presence of Amharic in educational and religious institutions.
- But some men, particularly the younger IP. replayed that communication with the sex workers/the prostitutes, then or now, demanded speaking Amharic or mixing as much as possible. It is a business area without standard language, pidgin worked.
- For a great number of IP. of some specific professional areas jargon was a common phenomenon. First at the workplace and then everywhere.  
Others IP. said that they began mixing as they became members of the newly introduced Christian sector full gospel, locally called 'mulu wongel'.

- Several IP mixed to show that they also can speak or can Amhara words and phrases.
4. What are your feelings about your mixing?  
Feelings vary; some participants feel it is a necessity, others take pride in it, and some are worried about the impact on Afan Oromo.
  5. Do you get any reaction from others when you communicate with them by mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo?  
Reactions from others are not explicitly always expressed. Some were considered as social climbers, wannabees Amhara speakers and suffered from identity complexity.
  6. Do you ever feel you do the right or wrong thing by mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo?  
IP.4 feels nothing is wrong with mixing and it gives a sense of pride.  
IP. 3 consciously avoids mixing and feels it is not harmless to the language and culture.
  7. Do you think you should have done differently?  
IP. 3 consciously avoids mixing and seems to suggest that not mixing might be a better approach.
  8. What language or languages did you have in school?  
Amharic was the medium of instruction in schools, except for English.
  9. Does mixing promotion or demotion to Afan Oromo?  
Several IP, of the higher consciousness levels, expressed their experience of disproportional language development where Amharic was favoured at the expense of Afan Oromo and culture.
  10. Were your teachers only Oromos or did you have even non-Afan Oromo-speaking teachers?  
Several IP. They were both non-Afan Oromo-speaking teachers, particularly Amharic speakers and others were Oromos.
  11. Is Afan Oromo your first language?  
For all IP, Afan Oromo is their mother tongue.
  12. What is your relationship to Amharic?  
The relationship varies; some IP learned Amharic through school or religious institutions, while others have had to interact with Amharic speakers in their community, profession, migration, business sectors and many more.

13. Are you multilingual?

The majority of IP are do speak Amharic as a second language.

14. Do you mix consciously or unconsciously?

Some participants mix habitually and unconsciously, while others are more deliberate about when and why they mix.

15. Can you speak one clear language without mixing?

IP.3 consciously avoids mixing and seems to be able to speak clearly without mixing.

16. What does language mean to you?

For Several IP. Afan Oromo is their identity and the carrier of their culture. While for some it is nothing but just a means of communication.

17. Are there some psychological aspects of mixing Amharic into Afan Oromo?

Some IP, consider Amharic as a more important language than Afan Oromo and therefore, they would rather speak Amharic or mix with Afan Oromo as it provides more status. Those who learn a more advanced language like English would prefer English to Amharic for mixing. There are IP. who do mix for the purpose of: wannabees, social climbers and those who seek language status from Amharic and those with identity complexity.

18. What is your attitude towards Afan Oromo and Amharic?

Attitudes are mixed; some IP are proud of Afan Oromo, while others see the practicality of mixing for communication.

19. Does communication in code-switching have any side effect on oneself and the speech society?

For several IP. it creates lingual segregation between the minority code-switchers and the majority of Oromos who are monolinguals, those who do not have Amharic knowledge and do not use the unstandardised language, pidgin. The other negative result of code-switching is the creation of sociolinguistic divisions in society, antagonising and disputes between each other.



## 14. Examples of language cocktails or Amharic mixed into Afan Oromo in speech.

These are ordinary and everyday ways of communication in Afan Oromo mixed with Amharic words. The word in italics and parenthesis is the Amharic one. The right Oromo word follows in bold.

1. Suuqii (*asxallii*) fokkisaa tokko keessaa (*migibii*) nyaata (*xaaffaacii*) minyaawaatu tu (*nagadama*) gurgurama
2. (*Qaxaroon*) beellamni kun (*baxaamiitti*) baayyee (*aschoka'ii*) ariifachiisaa dha?
3. (*Silkii*) bilbila naaf (*dawwali*) bilbili!
4. (*Gaashe*) Obbo (*gizee*) yeroo naaf qabduu?
5. Yeroo (*nigiggirii*) haasaa gootu maaliif akka (*ibdii*) maraatuu (*quwaanquwaa*) afaan walitti (*addabaalaqxa*) makta?9
6. Manni kee (*akkabaabii*) naannoo kami?
7. Haasaan kee (*giltisii, gilxii*) ifaa miti! (*Indaganaa*) haaraatti (*abraarra'i*) ibsi!
8. Yaada kana (*ishii*) tole jettaa?
9. Kun (*xaqillaallaan*) isaa (*shiggirii*) rakkoo (*xalaati*) diinni fideedha!
10. Ati Afan Oromo (*tikikkiliitti*) sirriitti (*xaafuu*) barreessuu fi (*nabbabuu*) dubbisuu (*chilootaa*) dandeettii qabdaa? Waan nama (*garramuudhaa*) dhibuudha!